India

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Woman's Union Missionary Society

MUSIC OF THE GOSPEL

By Miss Gardner

MISSIONARY AT CAWNPORE, INDIA

IN a small house in the native portion of the city of Cawnpore a woman lay dying, and though surrounded by a whole city full of idolatry and sin, the light of Divine love was in her face, and the name of Christ was on her lips. She was approaching the "dark valley" with a joy and peace nothing could disturb. In her presence, one could almost catch sight of the glory that awaited her, and Faber's beautiful hymn forced itself upon the mind:

> "Onward we go, for still we hear them singing:
> 'Come, weary souls! for Jesus bids you come';
> And through the dark, its echoes swiftly ringing,
> The music of the Gospel leads us home."

Shall I tell you of this dear child whom the "music of the Gospel" led to the Heavenly Home, her Father's House? A high-caste Bengali woman, nurtured and brought up as a native lady;

instructed in all that pertains to heathen life, its rites and superstitions, the first and most beloved wife of her husband, notwithstanding the fact that she had borne him no children, and, according to the Hindu custom he had for this reason taken another, her life seemed, to her less fortunate sisters, a singularly fortunate one. From the time of her early marriage no onerous labor had ever been laid upon her, and no more important duty than the right discharge of her obligations to the gods, in the offering of flowers which she, day by day, presented to her household deity, and the care of her household stuff, and jewels. But there was something in this woman's soul which this kind of life could not satisfy; there was a crying out amidst her worship of the seen and visible, for the unseen but true; a consciousness that there was something to be had, which she had not; a dim groping after God. Day by day—how can I write it?—this woman, with all a woman's earnestness and intense longing after holiness, knelt down in her blindness to a block of wood and stone and tried to find, by a conscientious doing of the only thing she knew how to do, the rest for which her soul craved. How often she arose from her humble prostration, weary in body and mind, and ready to cry out, "Why art Thou so far from me?"

But the light was to come, as the alms and prayers of Cornelius came up for him as a memorial before God, and more light was given him because he had done the best he could with what he had. So God's messenger came to this longing soul, and more light was to be given to her. One of the zenana visiting ladies found her out, and asked if she might read to her. How eagerly she accepted. Something of wonder and exaltation came into her mind as she listened to the beautiful story of the Cross. Obscurity began to scatter and light to dawn on her mind, as she grasped the idea of the unutterable love, "This Father all her own." She learned to

read, that she might herself read and study the life of Him who could do so much for her. Her heart was ready for the indwelling, and He came and took His abode there, never more to depart.

Now I wish I might leave her story here and say no more about it, but alas! I cannot. "I suffered much for thee." "What canst thou bear for Me?" God often asks this question of His children. He asked it of this dear child, and she proved that she could drink the bitter cup to its dregs. She could no longer worship idols, of course. "It is wrong, I cannot do it," was her reply to her husband's oft-repeated command; "I must obey God rather than you.' Then began a series of persecutions, slight at first, but increasing as the persistence of the woman become more apparent, and her quiet, undisturbed life was broken. Her husband's love was shadowed by the terrible fear, that his wife, by becoming a Christian, would disgrace him and cause him to be despised among his friends, so he persuaded, then threatened, and finally resorted to that right the native man claims as his, and beat her. But each and all were without effect. She remained strong and fearless, and true to the faith she had taken as hers, and still the Lord asked, "What canst thou bear for me?" and she was able through it all to recognize His loving hand upholding her, and to feel that though the cross was heavy He was holding the heavier end, and to answer: "What Thou wilt"—"Not my will but Thine be done."

One day her husband left her altogether, and the delicate and hitherto carefully-shielded zenana lady was left alone. Hoping to frighten her back to what he called her senses he had taken this extreme measure. Three miserable days she lived thus, cared for as much as possible by us, for she shrank from leaving her home. She was able to say through it all, "Christ is precious, oh, most precious!" But all this suffering and exposure were too much for the carefully-nurtured plant; a cold developed into a cough which would not yield to reme-

dies, and consumption quickly followed. Strange and difficult all the lessons she had been taught, but the blessing she needed lay behind, and now she found it very sweet and complete. As the end drew near how close He came to her, filling her with the Spirit's power, giving her in the needed hour His own message to comfort and sustain. All uncertainties passed away, and she rested abundantly in His love. Now she was not afraid to speak of the blessedness that had come to her. Weak in body she was strong and fearless to tell of the love of Christ. To her husband, who, finding it useless to oppose, had come back and was now gentle and kind to her; to her heathen friends who came to see her, lovingly she spoke the word that told of the glorious hope and gracious comforts so tender, sweet, and true, that had come into her short Christian life. Earnestly did she strive to point out the way to them, and surely the contrast as she drew near the valley of the shadow of death without fear, rejoicing rather that she was so near the city of holy rest, gently led thereto by her Saviour, must have struck those who had witnessed so many death-beds where abject fear made the passing away of the soul a terrible sight,—no knowledge of the future, and only a sinful life to look back upon. Who could help shrinking from it? But there was no fear in her; death had lost its sting in the certainty of the life beyond; the day was dawning; the darksome night was passed; fragments of the songs above reached her ear.

> "How sweet the truth those blessed strains are telling
> Of that new life where sin shall be no more!"

And so she passed away. Would that there might be more death-beds like this in India, and more who loved the Lord to point out the way! Surely the Master could ask no greater service of His children, than thus to show the way heavenward to those who, though longing after it, cannot themselves discern it.

For these women the WOMAN'S UNION MISSIONARY SOCIETY was organized in 1860, the first of its kind in this country. It is independent in character, truly a union of evangelical Christians, conducted by unsalaried officers. It needs *your* interest.

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